

O P I N I O N

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address, and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

Town halls in Sisters

To the Editor:

We are not talking to one another! We are not listening to one another! We need to communicate to each other within our community in order to work together and get things done in our community. Yes, politics is everywhere and in everything you do but it is now the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Civility and speaking with respect to each other is essential in order to get things done — environmental action (wildfires/water preservation), racial reckoning, mask or no mask, women's rights, voters' rights, education, infrastructure, farming needs, drought, growth, political tenure, gun policies, houseless remedies, crime control, drug trafficking,

See **LETTERS** on page 9

Sisters Weather Forecast

Wednesday

Feb. 23 • Sunny

26/9



Thursday

Feb. 24 • Mostly Cloudy

34/10



Friday

Feb. 25 • Sunny

39/12



Saturday

Feb. 26 • Partly Cloudy

47/25



Sunday

Feb. 27 • Mostly Cloudy

48/30



Monday

Feb. 28 • Mostly Cloudy

51/32



Tuesday

March 1 • Mostly Cloudy

56/33



The Nugget Newspaper, LLC

Website: www.nuggetnews.com

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Postmaster: Send address changes to The Nugget Newspaper, P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.

Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area. Third-class postage: one year, \$70; six months (or less), \$45. First-class postage: one year, \$110; six months, \$80.

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Concerned about our town

By David Pruett
Guest Columnist

Speaking out publicly is typically not my usual behavior. However, I felt compelled to comment after reading a series of articles (“City investigating new tourism model,” “Projected growth prompts planning projects,” “Focusing on livability,” and “City snapshot – traffic will have to slow down”) authored by correspondent Sue Stafford in the February 16 edition of *The Nugget*. Many thanks to Sue for writing these articles, which inspired me to think deeper about our community and the future of Sisters.

In the “City investigating new tourism model” article, Sue interviews Council President Nancy Connolly regarding the Council’s exploration of a Destination Management Organization (DMO) and better harnessing of the state-mandated Transient Lodging Tax (TLT). Nancy is quoted saying, “The goal is not to bring more people, the goal is to bring people who share our culture and values and to provide a sustainable year-round tourism base” and in particular “attracting visitors who want an authentic experience,” giving the example, “in our case ... a small-town Western experience.” She also mentioned that the Council is also trying to assure the “quality of life that attracted people to Sisters.”

As I read this article, we were driving into town passing by the new Sisters Woodlands property being developed on the former Forest Service property to the left and the Three Wind Development to the right, wondering how this level of development, in addition to the Hayden Homes developments near the high school, contribute to the “small-town Western experience” to be marketed with the proposed DMO. One also must wonder about summer traffic that residents, and the visitors anticipating a “small-town experience” attracted by the DMO marketing plan, will experience once these projects are completed.

The “Projected growth prompts planning projects” article delves into Sisters’ population growth projections, anticipated new residents, required housing, and Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) pressures. The article cites an anticipation of 1,100 new housing units in addition to those “already in the pipeline.” The article identifies UGB pressures indicating the city is approaching “build-out of its existing [available] land” making it

difficult to “accommodate the 1,100 housing units under existing circumstances.” The UGB pressures, described as “grow up” or “grow out” while “maintaining the city’s quality of life” lead to possible future consideration of UGB expansion to preserve the small-town Western experience and to provide housing for an anticipated additional 1,026 residents with the city limits. I look forward to future articles that will address water availability and infrastructure issues, especially given current summer traffic conditions and water availability during long-term drought and dry wells recently reported.

In “Focusing on livability” Connolly notes that “with a DMO, allocation of TLT (Transient Lodging Tax) could be focused on supporting a year-round program that correlates with our community values and potentially providing a future community amenity.” She states that in the past TLT funds have been turned over to the Chamber to use for tourism. It would be interesting to see in future articles how the Chamber has used these funds in the past to promote tourism, and how they might be leveraged in the future to promote additional tourism targeted at visitors anticipating enjoying a small-town Western experience. She notes that “Creating a DMO gives Council another way to help create a year-round program that benefits residents and tourists [while] ensuring we reach visitors with shared cultural values” in the same paragraph that describes the benefits of reduced speed on all city streets. Safety provided by reduced speed is important but also raises the question of increased congestion in the setting of promoting increased visitation with a DMO funded by leveraging TLT funds.

These comments are presented respectfully by someone who loves this town and surrounding area. Growth and development are intertwined issues that every small town faces sooner or later. This series of articles caused me to be concerned about our town. Embarrassingly, it made me “pull my head out of the sand” and look at things a bit differently. Perhaps that is the measure of good writing and journalism. I for one am thankful, because it caused me to do some additional reading and research. It caused me to become a bit more informed, which is the effect I hope many will experience when reading these, and future, articles pertaining to the growth and development of Sisters.

Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Sisters Shootout!

Jasper Jensen battles for two against Summit in Sisters Shootout action over the weekend.



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK